

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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USMISSION GENEVA

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE EC BRUSSELS 3207

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB, ICFTU, PO

SUBJECT: ICFTU MISSION TO PORTUGAL

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY OTTO KERSTEN WILL HEAD AN ELEVEN-MEMBER ICFTU DELEGATION WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE IN LISBON IN THE EVENING OF MAY 17. THE HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION WILL MEET WITH PORTUGUESE TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS TO DISCUSS ICFTU SUPPORT AND FINANCIAL AID FOR THE CONTRUCTION OF A DEMOCRATIC LABOR MOVEMENT IN PORTUGAL. THE ICFTU LEADERS ALSO HOPE TO MEET WITH GOP REPRESENTATIVES TO ENCOURAGE THE GRANTING OF FULL INDEPENDENCE TO THE PORTUGUESE TERRITORIES IN AFRICA. END SUMMARY.

2. IN ADDITION TO KERSTEN AND ENZO FRISO OF THE ICFTU SECRETARIAT, THE DELEGATION CONSITS OF THE FOLLOWING: GEORGES DEBUNNE, FGTB, BELGIUM; WIM KOK, NVV, NETHERLANDS; LENNART BODSTROM, TCO, SWEDEN; YONAH YAGOL, KISTRADRUT; IVAR NOREN, IMF; HERIBJQCFFMAIER, FIET; TOM BAVIN, FITPA; ANDRE BRACONIER, SPIE; AND EHF SERVAS, INTERNATIONAL TEXTILE WORKERS FEDERATION.

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3. THE DELEGATION WILL REMAIN IN LISBON TWO DAYS ALTHOUGH TENTATIVE PROVISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR SOME MEMBERS TO STAY LONGER. FRISO HAS BEEN GIVEN PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR COORDINATING ICFTU ACTIVITIES IN PORTUGAL AND WILL BE DIVIDING HIS TIME BETWEEN BRUSSELS AND LISBON IN THE COMING MONTHS.

4. FRISO, WHO SPEND THE FIRST WEEK OF MAY IN LISBON, IS VERY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE GENERAL LABOR SITUATION IN PORTUGAL. HE RECENTLY TOLD THE MISSION LABOR ATTACHE THAT THE COMMUNISTS WERE THE ONLY ORGANIZED AND ACTIVE POLITICAL FORCE IN THE LABOR SECTOR DURING THE LONG YEARS OF DICTATORSHIP AND CONSEQUENTLY HAVE A DECIDED ADVANTAGE OVER THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERS WHO HAVE SURFACED SINCE THE COUP. HE ATTRIBUTED MUCH OF THIS INITIAL COMMUNIST SUPERIORITY TO THE EFFORTS OF THE FRENCH CGT WHICH FOR SEVERAL YEARS HAS BEEN CULTIVATING AND TRAINING PORTUGUESE MIGRANT WORKERS IN FRANCE. MANY OF THIS TRAINED CADRE, HE SAID, RETURNED TO PORTUGAL OVER THE YEARS AND ARE NOW IN THE VANGUARD OF THE COUNTRY'S TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP.

5. COMMENT: FRISO'S PESSIMISM IS SHARED BY MOST BRUSSELS-BASED INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION LEADERS. THEY ARE EXTREMELY SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF STARTING FROM SCRATCH IN CONSTRUCTING A DEMOCRATIC LABOR MOVEMENT IN PORTUGAL. THEY ARE ALSO FEARFUL THAT THE WEAK AND TOTALLY UNPREPARED DEMOCRATIC SECTOR COULD BE QUICKLY ABSORBED BY THE COMMUNISTS IN ANY KIND OF SHARED LEADERSHIP ARRANGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNISTS. A TWO-DAY MISSION IS NOT LIKELY TO HAVE ANY IMPACT ON THE SITUATION BUT THE ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD, WHICH MEETS IN BRUSSELS ON MAY 31, WILL HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF FIRST-HAND OBSERVATION BY SEVERAL OF ITS MEMBERS IN ASSESSING THE SITUATION AND IN FORMULATING FUTURE ICFTU POLICY IN PORTUGAL. GREENWALD

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